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Natural Equality.
A Sermon before the Vermont Colonization Society-
By Joseph Tracy. 1833.

Class E 448
Book .T76

NATURAL EQUALITY.

A SERMON

BEFORE THE

VERMONT COLONIZATION SOCIETY,

AT MONTPELIER, OCTOBER 17, 1833.

BY JOSEPH TRACY.

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MDCCCXXXIII.

AT the Annual Meeting of the Vermont Colonization Society, held at Montpelier, October 17, 1833,

Voted,—That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Rev. JOSEPH TRACY for his sermon, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for the press.

C. WRIGHT, *Secretary*.

SERMON.

Acts, 17: 26, 27.—And hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord.

That is; God has given to all men the same nature, that they may all receive and enjoy the benefits of the same gospel. These benefits are, *spiritual*, consisting in the eternal salvation of the soul from wickedness and misery; and *temporal*, consisting in the enjoyments which belong to a truly religious citizen of a free, Christian community; such a community as the principles of the gospel tend to form. The text, then, in its connexion, brings to view the fundamental doctrine of our Declaration of Independence—that "all men are created equal; endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

As the doctrine of the existence of God lies at the foundation of all that is valuable in morals, yet, when misunderstood and misapplied, is the main instrument of inflicting upon the world all the evils of superstition, fanaticism and religious tyranny; so this doctrine of natural equality lies at the foundation of all that is valuable in the political relations of men,—and yet, when misunderstood and misapplied, is the most powerful of all political doctrines in the destruction of good and the production of evil. As we are met to bear our part in alleviating some of the evils which flow from an outrageous violation of this principle, it cannot be deemed inappropriate to consider some of its possi-

ble and of its actual applications, both for the benefit and for the injury of the human race; for unless we understand the principle which has been violated, we may not understand the remedy.

And first, of its misapplications. I will quote to you, from a scientific expositor of the doctrine, as held early in the French Revolution. I quote from a work, "published for the first time in 1793, under the title of The French Citizen's Catechism;—intended for a national work." The author says,

Here is the primordial basis, the physical origin of all justice and all right.

Whatever be the active power, the moving cause that governs the universe, since it has given to all men the same organs, the same sensations, and the same wants, it has thereby declared that it has given to all the same right to the use of its treasures, and that all men are equal in the order of nature.

Secondly, since this power has given to each man the necessary means of preserving his own existence, it is evident that it has constituted them all independent one of another; that it has created them free; that each is absolute proprietor of his own person.

Equality and liberty are therefore two essential attributes of man; two laws of the Divinity, constitutional and unchangeable, like the physical properties of matter.

Now, every individual being absolute master of his own person, it follows that a free and full consent is a condition indispensable to all contracts and all engagements.

Again, since each individual is equal to another, it follows that the balance of what is received and what is given should be strictly in equilibrium; so that the idea of liberty necessarily imports that of justice, the daughter of equality.

Equality and liberty are therefore the physical and unalterable basis of every union of men in society, and consequently the necessary and generating principle of every law and of every system of regular government.*

Let us inquire what use has been made of the principles here laid down. One principle is, that "the Cause that governs the universe has given to all, the same right to the use of its Treasures." I am unable, from the want of suitable documents, to show how much influence this doctrine had on the numerous sweeping confiscations of the property

*Volney's Ruins. Chap. 17.

of the rich, which took place during the French Revolution; but I will read to you a few words of a kindred spirit in England. He asks,

What is the criterion that must determine whether this or that substance, capable of contributing to the benefit of a human being, ought to be considered as your property or mine? To this question there can be but one answer—Justice. Let us then recur to the principles of justice. To whom does any article of property, suppose a loaf of bread, justly belong? To him who most wants it, or to whom the possession of it will be most beneficial.—If justice have any meaning, nothing can be more unjust than for one man to possess superfluities, while there is a human being in existence that is not adequately supplied with them.—If religion had spoken out, and told us that it was just that all men should receive the supply of their wants, we should presently have been led to suspect that a gratuitous distribution to be made by the rich was a very indirect and ineffectual way of arriving at this object. The principal object which it seems to propose is, to place this supply in the disposal of a few, enabling them to make a show of generosity with what is not truly their own, and to purchase the gratitude of the poor by the payment of a debt.*

In this country it has been argued, "that the world belongs to all men equally, and labor belongs to those who perform it, are conclusions as inevitable, as that a man's right hand is his own."† And on these grounds, a convention was proposed and publicly urged in the State of New York, in the year 1830, which should order,

An immediate abolition of all debts.

An inventory of all real and personal property within the state.

A census of all the inhabitants, white or black.

An equal division of all the property, real and personal, among such citizens indiscriminately, as have arrived at the age of eighteen, without regard to color.

An apportionment of a full share to every citizen, as he shall hereafter arrive at the age of eighteen.

The abolition of all interest on money, and the right of making wills.‡

Do you say, there is no danger that men will reason thus?

*Godwin's Political Justice. Book 8. chap. 1.

†Free Enquirer, Vol. 4. p. 283.

‡The "Friend of Equal Rights," for April 24, 1830, as quoted in the Free Enquirer, Vol. 2. p. 393.

I answer, men *have* reasoned thus, and been very confident in their reasonings. They have published them, with the intention of inducing nations to adopt them. The party, from one of whose organs the last extract was taken, professed to have 20,000 followers in the city of New York alone, and nominated its candidate for the presidency of the United States.

The rights of property being thus reasoned away from us, let us see what is to become of civil government. We are told, secondly, that the Divinity has "constituted" men "all independent one of another; that it has created them free; that no man is subject to another; that each is absolute proprietor of his own person." Now I ask, how shall government over such "independent" beings begin to exist? By the voice of the majority? The majority may agree together as to what they themselves will do; but where do they get their right to control the minority, who are "constituted independent" of them, and are "absolute proprietors of their own persons?" The author of this system counts no form of society perfect, except one "according to which each one, uniting with the whole, shall yet obey himself only, and remain as free as before."* On this principle, it is plain, there can be no government at all. The logical inference is clearly stated by the English writer already quoted. He says,

> That coercion of a municipal kind can in no case be the duty of the community.—Coercion can, at no time, either permanently or provisionally, make part of any political system that is built upon reason.—Punishment—at least so far as relates to the individual, is injustice. The infliction of stripes upon my body can throw no new light upon the question between us.†

Here criminal jurisprudence is annihilated at a blow. Every commitment to the state prison, we are taught, is an act of "injustice." Its walls ought at once to be treated as those of the Bastile have been.

But what then? Shall we submit to all the violence which the wicked see fit to inflict upon us? This would be intolerable. Hear our author further.

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*Rosseau, *Du Contrat Social*, Liv. Ier. chap. 6. In The Friend, by S. T. Coleridge. p. 161 to 173, Burlington edition, the metaphysical errors of this system are ably exposed.

†Godwin's Political Justice. Book 7. chap. 5.

But as long as nations shall be so far mistaken as to endure a complex government and an extensive territory, coercion will be indispensably necessary to general security. It is therefore the duty of individuals to take an active share upon the occasion, in so much coercion, and in such parts of the existing system, as shall be sufficient to prevent the inroad of universal violence and tumult.*

Here we have what our author calls "the abolition of law;" and we have, as its substitute, the application of force, at the caprice of "individuals." If these individuals amount to a majority, they can, while they avoid all use of "coercion" and infliction of "punishment," impose upon the refractory such "restraint" as they deem necessary, by the use of the cannon or the guillotine. True, this is a violation of their principles; but they are forced to violate their principles in order to maintain them; and in the violation they know no "law," for "law" is "abolished."†

But we have not done yet. Listen to another extract.

Are not all women "endowed with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" Are not governments (both matrimonial and legal) "instituted among men to secure these rights?" Do not marriages, as well as governments, "derive their just powers from the consent" of the contracting parties? "Whenever any" marriage, (be it of a king to his subjects or a husband to his wife) "becomes destructive of these ends," is it not right that it should be dissolved?‡

You easily see how, on this ground, a claim might be advanced for women to vote at elections, and to hold every kind of civil and even military office, just as men do; and on this ground, "the monopoly of legal authority" by men has actually been made a subject of complaint in this country.§ But let that pass. Hear another extract about marriage.

Marriage is an affair of property, and the worst of all properties. So long as I seek to engross one woman to myself, and to prohibit my neighbor from proving his superior desert and reaping the fruits

*Godwin's Political Justice. Book 7. chap. 5.

†Much deep and close thinking, and much practical wisdom on this subject, mingled with some undue partiality for monarchy, may be found in the third and fourth volumes of Burke's Works. Boston, 1826.

‡Free Enquirer, Vol. 4. p. 141.

§Ib. Vol. 1. p. 117.

of it, I am guilty of the most odious of all monopolies.—The abolition of marriage will be attended with no evils.*

This theory has not always remained a mere theory. The French Constituent Assembly of 1789 commenced the work of altering the laws on this subject. "Succeeding assemblies went the full length of the principle, and gave a license to divorce at the mere pleasure of either party, and at one month's notice." The reason they assigned was, "that women had been too long under the tyranny of parents and husbands."†

This was not the mere work of caprice, or the outbursting of brutal passion. It was an unavoidable inference from the Jacobinical doctrine of the Rights of Man. They must give up their fundamental principles, or come to this conclusion; and to another conclusion too. Hear it from Godwin.

> It cannot be definitively affirmed whether it will be known, in such a state of society, who is the father of each individual child. But it may be affirmed that such knowledge will be of no importance. It is aristocracy, self-love and family pride that teach us to set a value upon it at present. I ought to prefer no human being to another, because that being is my father, my wife, or my son, but because, for reasons which equally appeal to all understandings, that being is entitled to preference.—It will then be thought no more legitimate to make boys slaves, than to make men so.‡

And why should it not be so? Have not children, as well as women, "certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?"

Further extracts, in abundance, are at hand, but I will not use them. Enough has been said, to show that the doctrine of the natural equality of men may be so misunderstood and misapplied, as to upturn all government whatever, whether of nations, states, or families, and to teach us that reasoning is not always to be esteemed sound, because it appears, at first view, to rest on that foundation.

The fallacy of all this reasoning is easily shown. We have only to ask, what is meant by the proposition, that "all men are created equal." Equal to what?—to whom? To

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*Political Justice, Book 8. chap. 6.

†Burke's Letters on a Regicide Peace. Works, Vol. 4. p. 259, Boston ed. 1826.

‡Political Justice, Book 8. chap. 6.

full grown men? Cadmus, we are told in ancient fable, sowed the earth with dragon's teeth, and there sprang up a crop of full grown men, ready armed for battle, who forthwith engaged in a war of extermination against each other. Every doctrine which ascribes to men a similar original independence and equality, may be expected to end in similar results. The French revolution was an instance. But men are not thus born. They are born equal *to other infants.* They are born with an equal claim upon those that are older, for nourishment, protection, guidance, government. They are born with an equal right to be brought up, to be educated, to be made fit for freedom. They are born with an equal claim on those who are older and wiser than themselves, for that government, that restraint and coercion, without which not one of them in twenty would ever live to be a man. They are born with an equal claim upon the state, for the enacting of such laws as shall secure these benefits to them; as shall fit them for the enjoyment of freedom and make them freemen. They have a claim for such laws as shall do this, in the most speedy and effectual manner which the circumstances of society permit.

It is not true that all children, throughout the whole earth, have a claim for the *same laws* and the *same* instruction. The child of an Esquimaux may not demand of his parents, the same education which is due to a child in Vermont; for the parent cannot give it, and no one is bound to perform what is impossible. Esquimaux children, then, have no claim on the Esquimaux community, for laws requiring such an education; but they have a claim on their parents and on the community, to do all that their circumstances render possible, towards fitting them for all the rights and privileges in that country; and they have a right to such laws as shall secure to them the enjoyment of Esquimaux freedom, whenever they are fit for it.

On this principle we practice. The state takes such measures as it judges necessary, to fit its children for the station of freemen. With these privileges, we expect them to be fit for that station at the age of twenty-one; and from the necessity of having some general rule, and not because the number three times seven, has any magical power to confer "natural and unalienable rights," we enact that they shall

be free at that age. If, however, one shows himself so manifestly unfit that he cannot be safely trusted with freedom, we put him under guardianship, or in the state prison, as the case may require. The correctness of this doctrine is so obvious, that I shall spend no time in proving it. Let us consider the application of these principles to the greatest problem which our country has to solve.

There are in the United States, two millions of slaves. What shall be done with them? Something *must* be done. All principles of humanity, of justice, of our own free institutions, imperiously demand it. We cannot be willingly inactive, and yet be innocent. But *what* shall be done? Give them their liberty. Yes, give them their liberty—is the response of every heart and every conscience. They are born with the same right to liberty as ourselves, and we must give it to them. We must confer it upon them as we do upon our own sons; first make them fit for freedom, and then make them freemen.

But, we are told, we have no right to wait till they are fit for freedom; that they have a right to freedom *now;* that "all men are created equal; endowed with certain unalienable rights, among which" is "liberty," the full enjoyment of which we have no right to withhold from them one moment. So we are told, that in a perfect state of society, "it will no more be thought legitimate to make boys slaves, than to make men so;" that *children* are "created equal; endowed with certain unalienable rights, among which" is "liberty."—But, we are told, no human being is created subject to another; therefore the slaves may not be held in subjection another hour. True, says some wayward child; no human being is created subject to another, and therefore I may not be held in subjection another hour. True, rejoins some one just come of age, I was not created subject to any man, or any two men, or any twenty millions of men, and I will not be in subjection to them a single hour, even though they call themselves the nation.—But we are told again, every human being has a right to his own limbs, and therefore to the fruits of his own labor, and no one has a right to take it from him; and the undutiful son adopts this argument too, and, as a human being, demands the control of his own limbs, and of his own earnings. And so of all arguments

for *immediate emancipation, founded on the naked doctrine of the equal rights of all men.* Give that doctrine such an interpretation that it will sustain that inference, and the same interpretation will sustain other inferences, at war with all government whatever. This is not the American interpretation. It is that of French Jacobinism. Our fathers *understood* this doctrine, and guided by its light, they built up this republic—the joy and wonder of the world. The Jacobins misunderstood it; and, misled by their own false theory, they deluged France in blood, and whelmed Europe in tears.*

Indeed, the doctrine of immediate emancipation is so much at variance with all the dictates of common sense, that even its most vociferous advocates at times shrink back from it, and talk as if it were not *exactly* their doctrine. And in no case have statesmen been found, bold enough to apply it to large masses of men in bondage, without such qualifications as essentially change the very nature of the act. Certain "Extracts from Clarkson's Thoughts" have lately been published at New York, to show, by historical facts, the safety of immediate emancipation. In the three first instances on which Clarkson relies, he acknowledges that the emancipated had something equivalent to "a preparatory school," which "fitted them by degrees for making a good use of their liberty." He adds, "I never stated that our West Indian slaves were to be emancipated *suddenly*, but *by degrees.* I always, on the other hand, took it for granted, that they were to have *their preparatory school* also." Mr. Clarkson, then, was not acquainted with any example which would show the desirableness of "sudden" emancipation. His fourth instance is that of recaptured negroes, taken from slave ships and settled at Sierra Leone, under British Colonial government; a case on which he places little reliance in argument.

The fifth instance is that of St. Domingo. According to Clarkson, difficulties had arisen on the question, whether blacks who were born free should enjoy *all* rights of citizenship, equally with the whites. These difficulties led to "battles, massacres and burnings," till it became necessary for the French Commissioners to issue a proclamation, in which

*See note A.

"they promised to give freedom to all blacks, who were willing to range themselves under the banners of the republic" of France. The effect of this proclamation on the slaves was such that the Commissioners thought it "absolutely necessary, for the personal safety of the white planters," to extend the same privilege to all the slaves in the colony. A register was opened, in which the planters were urged to subscribe their assent to this proposition, and all but one complied. This proposal was made in September, 1793; and in February, 1794, the Directory passed a decree for the abolition of slavery in the Colonies. Now notice the *conditions* of this emancipation. 1. "The laborers were *obliged* to hire themselves to their masters, for not less than a year; at the end of which, but not before, they might quit the service and engage with others." 2. "They were to receive a third part of the produce of the estate, as a recompense for their labor." 3. After Toussaint, a negro, came into power, about the end of 1796, he "took away from every master, the use of the whip, and of the chain, and of every other instrument of correction, either by himself or his own order: he took away, in fact, all power of arbitrary punishment." He increased the term of service from one year to five years, and reduced the compensation from one third to one fourth of the produce. He "succeeded in making the black laborers return to the plantations, there to resume the drudgery of cultivation." Notice the words *return* and *resume*. It appears, then, that the negroes, *after* what is called their emancipation, were *obliged* to work for the planters, *at first* without the privilege of choosing their masters, and *always* at a price fixed by others, and till the time of Toussaint, were liable to be driven to their labors by the whip or some "other instrument of punishment," applied at the discretion of their employers; and the result was such, that Toussaint was thought to do wonders, when he made them *return* to the plantations and *resume* their "drudgery." Does this prove "the safety, practicability, and expediency of *immediate* emancipation?" And do those among us, who advocate immediate emancipation, mean that our slaves should immediately be put into the condition just described?

The sixth case mentioned by Clarkson is that of the slaves in Colombia, South America, where a decree was passed July 19, 1821, giving freedom to all slaves who had served in the armies of the republic, and providing that all born after the date of the decree should be free at the age of 18. This is gradual emancipation, again, on the same principle adopted in New York.

The last case mentioned by Clarkson, is that of Hon. Joshua Steele, of Barbadoes, of which he says, "It took him six years, to bring his negroes to the state of vassalage described, or to that state from whence he was sure that they might be transferred without danger, in no distant time, to the rank of free men, if it should be thought desirable." "Immediate abolition," truly!

Others have adduced the example of Mexico. In this instance, the slaves were all declared *free* at once, but were considered as in debt to their former masters, to the amount of the money for which they might have been sold before emancipation; and they were obliged to remain on the plantations and labor as formerly, till they had paid that debt by their labor; and a police system was established to enforce this regulation. The amount of it was, the law secured to them the privilege of buying their freedom, which they generally accomplished in the course of twelve years.

So far, then, not a single instance is found, of the "immediate emancipation" of all the slaves of any country. In every instance brought forward by the advocates of that doctrine, they were emancipated, not "suddenly," but by "degrees," as Mr. Clarkson maintains they ought to be. Even now, in England, a strong effort has been made to procure "immediate emancipation." They must all be made free in a moment; but, according to the bill which the friends of that measure have carried through Parliament, that *moment* is to be several years long. Why is this? Emancipation, we are told, ought not to be gradual. The demands of justice require that it be done "instanter." Accordingly, a bill is brought in, which enacts that it shall be done in twelve years. If gentlemen mean, emancipation in twelve years, why do they not say so? Why agitate the country, by calling it "immediate?" And why compel us to understand them literally, by using arguments which, if they

proved any thing, would prove that it ought to be, strictly, immediate?*

Indeed, it does not seem that any body seriously means to practice on the theory of immediate emancipation. It is used merely for the sake of producing excitement. The Jacobinical argument is the shortest, and most exciting to shallow thinkers, of any yet invented. It proves, however, if it proves any thing, that slaves ought to be emancipated,—as Clarkson says they ought not,—"suddenly," and without any "preparatory school." And it proves, with equal force, that all slaves, and all women, and all children, should at once take part, equally with others, in the civil government of the country. And then it proves, that if any of them choose not to obey the laws of that government, they have an "unalienable right" to set them at defiance.†

This will not do. Instead of this, we must deal with them as with our own children. We must educate them for freedom, and then make them freemen. We have no more right to neglect this, or to delay it needlessly, than in the case of our own children. By the dispensations of Providence, and in part, at least, by our own acts, they are made dependent upon us; they are in our power; they can receive this boon at our hands; and it can come to them from no other source. We have, therefore, no right to neglect or delay the bestowment of it. The hearty adoption of this doctrine, as true, as binding upon us, as what we must and will practise upon, is our first duty; and when we have done this, all else will inevitably follow in due season.

Is it objected, that educating them is dangerous, because ability to read and write will give them dangerous facilities for planning and executing insurrections? We ask in reply, what is the education, indispensable to fit one for freedom? Is it ability to read and write? Do we not know that hundreds possess this ability, who are not fit for freedom after all, and who, for that reason, are shut up within the walls of the penitentiary? Do we not know that other hundreds, who have never learned these arts, are trust worthy, and exercise the rights and perform the duties of citizenship safely and profitably to themselves and the country?

*Mr. Garrison denounces the bill for abolishing slavery in the West Indies, as a "triumph of Gradualism." †See note B.

How is a man the better for being able to read, if he never reads any thing? Of what use is this ability, except as a means of acquiring valuable ideas, and establishing himself in good principles? Can ideas and principles be obtained in no other way but by reading? Can you not understand a book, unless you read it yourself; or a conversation, unless it be written down, and put into your hands on paper? The art of reading, we know, wonderfully increases the facility with which we may fit ourselves for the performance of duty; but it is possible to become safe citizens without it. We therefore pass no sentence, either of condemnation or approval, on those who withhold this art from their slaves. We only say, they *must be educated.* You must educate them. Take your own way to do it. If you find it safe to put books into their hands, it will diminish your labor immensely. If not, you must do it, nevertheless. The labor of educating them without books will be immense; but, books or no books, it must be done; and if books are unsafe instruments, you must work the harder. You must furnish them with such ideas of the ends and objects of human life, and of the duties of man to his fellow man, and establish in their minds such principles for the government of their own conduct, as will make them safe citizens. You must do it, for the same reasons which binds you to do it for your own children;—because they are human beings, who have a right to receive this discipline from some one who is able to bestow it; and your God, who is also their God, has put that ability into your hands, and into yours alone.

Is it said that this principle is inefficient—that it can never accomplish the object? We deny it. It is powerful. It can do all that needs to be done. Just look for a moment at its operation. Let the planters, generally, teach their slaves to revere God. Will they themselves be profane? In some instances, they doubtless will; but on the great scale, the instruction they give will be found to react on those who give it, so that they will more generally observe the dictates of conscience. The very fact that the planter brings duty so distinctly before his own mind as he must do in order to teach it, will make him more observant of it. The fact that he looks up and uses arguments for the observance of duty, will make him feel more strongly

that he ought to observe it.—Let all planters teach the Christian duty of governing the passions. Can such general and perpetual familiarity with truth on this subject fail to promote self government in those who teach it?—Let all planters teach their slaves the Christian duty of observing the seventh commandment. Let them teach the sacredness of the marriage relation. Let them make their slaves fully understand why that covenant should always be kept inviolate. I omit other questions, and only ask, will not these teachers be careful how they break up families by selling their members? Will they, by selling the husband here and the wife there, almost force them upon transgression? Will not marriage and domestic relations become practical, permanent blessings, and begin to put forth among them all those holy influences for which God has appointed them? —Let the planters all teach their slaves to be just; to regard as they ought, the rights of their fellow men, and to render to every one his due; and will not a conscientious rendering to their slaves their due increase among the planters themselves?—Let them teach these things, because they regard their slaves, not as mere property, but as human beings, who have a right to be prepared by such teaching for the enjoyment of freedom, and then to be free; and let them do it for the sake of preparing them for freedom, that they may be made free; and can the evils of slavery long endure? We see plainly that they cannot. Before such a course, before such a spirit, every obstacle to its entire removal must give way, and its last remnants must be speedily and safely removed.

Some one may say, this would do, if it were in operation; but you cannot start it. We do not wish to start it. It is already in operation. Read the "Journal of a Missionary to the Negroes in the State of Georgia," which has of late been extensively published in our religious papers. This Missionary is a slave holder. He is devoting his time, his wealth, his life, to the work of promoting among the slaves, that godliness, which "is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." There are other slave holders, men of wealth, of talent, of learning, who have consecrated themselves to this work. Planters are numerous, who welcome

these men to their plantations, and assemble their slaves to be instructed by them, and to unite with them in the worship of God. Extensive associations of planters are formed, for the purpose of giving system and energy to these operations. The late revivals of religion in the southern states have produced a mighty influence in this direction; an influence of which, at the south, few are ignorant, and the existence of which none dispute. You may learn the fact from their political newspapers even. Men there are beginning to feel extensively, that the doctrine of our text is true; that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men,—that they should seek the Lord;"—that he has given them one common nature, and one common gospel, to which all ought to have access. They are beginning, more and more, to act on this principle; and it will have the same effect which it had when Paul preached it and men embraced it at Athens and at Rome;—it will abolish slavery. If slave laws remain as they are, it will render them inoperative, for it will remove all occasion for the use of them. If laws need to be altered, it will alter them. It will prove the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, not only to the individuals who receive it, but to the community which it pervades.*

Some may object, that the removal of slavery on this principle, though certain in the end, is too distant to content us; that these operations reach but a small part of our slave holding territory; that we need something which shall appeal to every citizen, and especially to every slave holder, in the United States; something which shall present the negro race before us, not only as moral agents, capable of salvation, but as capable of being fitted for citizenship; as having a claim upon us to fit them for it and bestow it upon them; something too, the execution of which does not wholly depend on the slave holders themselves; something in which all the citizens of the Union can engage, and thus bear their testimony to the truth which makes men free.

There is some force in these objections. They show the need of just such an enterprise as we are now assembled to promote. What is the American Colonization Society doing? It is laboring to build up a civilized, well governed na-

*See Note C.

tion of free colored people. The very endeavor is proof, that we consider the existence of such a nation possible; that we regard negroes as beings out of whom such a nation can be built. Every step taken in this enterprize proceeds on the ground that negroes can be made, and ought to be made, and we desire to make them, free citizens of a free country. On this ground I rest the defence of the society, and its claims to your support. I omit numerous topics of argument which might be used, and with which you are already familiar. I stay not to dally with objections which do not touch this point. I ask not whether, in forming and executing its plans, the men, mere men, who compose it, have shown wisdom absolutely infinite, and infinite watchfulness against mistakes. I shall not try to do the work of the day of judgement beforehand, by inquiring whether two or three or more of them may not have certain *by ends* of their own to answer by it. I shall not inquire whether some of its members entertain, at the same time, the two opposite designs of removing all the slaves from the country, and of making their slavery perpetual in it. I shall not argue the question whether all vice, or any vice, is more thoroughly excluded from Monrovia, than from any village in the United States; or whether the administration of government in that colony is more perfect than it ever has been, or, till the millennium at least, ever will be, in any other community on earth. If any maintain that both the Managers of the Society and the Colonists are, after all, mere men, and that, by diligent search, such errors as men are liable to, may be found among them, I shall not dispute it; and if any one shall say that some of its enemies are capable of exaggeration, and others of falsehood, I shall not dispute that. I leave all such questions to those who have leisure for them. I point you to Liberia. There it stands, upon the coast of Africa, a monument of the truth, that negroes, and even negro slaves, can be made, and ought to be made, and we desire to make them, free citizens of a free community. By its very existence, it testifies this truth to all that pass by in ships; to all who consider where ships shall be sent; to all who consider, in what seas ships must be defended. It stands, or soon will stand, an intelligible monument of this truth, on the map of Africa, in the hands of every child who studies

geography in any school on earth. Can this universal testimony, thus forced perpetually upon the notice of all men, fail to produce an effect?

The Society appeals directly and personally to every citizen of the United States, and of course to every slave holder in the United States. It asks him to bestow his aid, and by bestowing his aid in removing slaves who are manumitted for this purpose, to bear his testimony to the truth, that negroes, negro slaves even, can be made, and ought to be made, and he desires to make them, free citizens of a free community. It asks him to bear this testimony by acting on this principle;—by doing what would be the veriest and most manifest folly imaginable, on any other principle. Can this appeal be thus universally and perpetually made, and especially, can slave holders generally comply with it, without strengthening the principles by which slavery will be removed?*

The Society appeals to you this night. As you have been officially informed, hundreds of slaves are waiting for freedom, only till the Society shall be enabled to colonize them. Only furnish the means, and they will be made free citizens of a free community. Show, then, by your deeds, how much confidence you have in the capacity of slaves to receive and enjoy the blessings of freedom, and how ardently you desire that it may be conferred upon them. The influence of what you shall do will not expire with the doing of the deed, or be limited to the direct recipients of your bounty. What you do will be matter of record. It will go abroad. It will be published to the ends of the land and of the earth. It will tell on public sentiment. In proportion as it shall show that you are in earnest, it will swell and strengthen the tide of right feeling, which is to sweep slavery from our land and from the world.

*See note D.

NOTES.

NOTE A. Page 11.

Since this discourse was delivered, I have obtained a copy of Condorcet's "Historical View," from which a few passages are selected, bearing directly on this point.

I. *The foundation of the doctrine.* "Writers on politics and the law of nations at length arrived at the knowledge of the true rights of man, which they deduce from this simple principle: *that he is a being endowed with sensation, capable of reasoning upon and understanding his interests, and of acquiring moral ideas.*" Page 154. Baltimore edition.

Here, we see, the principle that a man is a member of the human family, connected with the other members by various relations, and therefore incapable of having any rights inconsistent with those relations, is wholly overlooked.

II. *What some of these rights are.* "Hence it appears to be one of the rights of man," —i. e. of every "being endowed with sensation" &c.; of course, according to Condorcet, of every woman and every child,—"that he should employ his faculties, dispose of his wealth, and provide for his wants, in whatever manner he shall think best." *Ib. p.* 158.

III. *That this doctrine caused the French Revolution.* "By comparing the disposition of the public mind, which I have already sketched, with the prevailing systems of government, we shall perceive, without difficulty, that an important revolution was inevitable, and that there were two ways only in which it could take place: either the people themselves would establish a system of policy upon those principles of nature and reason, which philosophy had rendered so dear to their hearts, or government might hasten to supersede this event, by reforming its vices, and governing its conduct by the public opinion.—The corruption and ignorance of the rulers of nations have preferred, it seems, the former of these modes; and the sudden triumph of reason and liberty has avenged the human race." *Ib. p.* 173.

IV. *The French doctrine of the rights of man different from the American.* "If we examine the nature of these constitutions, [those of the American States] we shall discover ——why an identity of interests, rather than an equality of rights, is adopted as their principle." *Ib. p.* 175.

"It would be easy to show how much more pure, accurate, and profound, are the principles upon which the constitution and laws of France have been formed, than those which directed the Americans; and how much more completely the authors have withdrawn themselves from the influence of a variety of prejudices; that the great basis of policy, the equality of rights, has never been superseded by that fictious identity of interests, which has so often been made its feeble and hypocritical substitute; that limits prescribed to political power have been put in the place of that specious balance which has so long been admired; that we were the first to dare, in a great nation necessarily dispersed, and which cannot personally be assembled but in broken and numerous parcels, to maintain in the people their rights of sovereignty, the right of obeying no laws but those which, though originating in a representative authority, shall have received their last sanction from the nation itself; laws which, if found to be injurious to its rights or interests, the nation is always organized to reform by a regular act of its sovereign will." *Ib. p.* 178.

This last extract shows, not only that the French and American doctrines of the rights of man are different, but that this difference of doctrines led to differences in the forms of government in the two nations. Had Condorcet

lived a few years longer, he might have noticed other differences in the practical results of the two doctrines, in which he would have gloried less.—What Condorcet protests against, under the name of "identity of interests," is probably an implied recognition of the nature of man, as a member of human society, having an interest in whatever interests the other members, and not as a mere individual "being, endowed with sensation," &c. The expression is not very lucid; and I do not quote the passage as a lesson in metaphysics, but as the testimony of a man, whose speculations did much to give to the French revolution its peculiar character.

That the French revolutionary doctrine of the Rights of Man was different from the American, and that the French legislators knew it to be different, is further proved by the following statement.

The national assembly was busily occupied in forming different parts of the new constitution, and particularly in framing their celebrated declaration of the rights of men and of citizens. On this last subject the assembly seemed greatly to bewilder themselves in abstract questions and metaphysical disquisitions. La Fayette, whose principles were truly and entirely American, brought forward a declaration, which was little more or less than an epitome of all those that had been adopted by the different members of the United States. This might possibly have been so far received as to become in some degree a sort of ground-work to their own, if the abbe Sieyes had not composed an abstract and difficult work, in which he defined and traced the rights of man to their first principles. Though the abbe's friends and admirers were unsuccessful in their support of this production, they, however, procured the overthrow of La Fayette's system.—*London Annual Register, Vol.* 32, *p.* 30.

NOTE B. Page 14.

From the Declaration of Rights, prefixed to the French Constitution of September, 1791.

I. All men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights.

VI. The law is the expression of the general will: all the citizens have a right to concur personally, or by their representatives, to the formation of the law.

XIV. Every citizen has a right, by himself, or his representatives, to decide concerning the necessity of the public contribution; to consent to it freely, to look after the employment of it; to determine the quantity, the distribution, the collection, and duration.

London Annual Register, Vol. 33, *p.* 152*.

Comment. Crowds of "beings endowed with sensation, *capable* of understanding their interests" much better than they did, and "of acquiring moral ideas" with which they showed little acquaintance, believing that they "were born" and "remained equal in rights" to the members of the National Assembly, often took upon themselves to give "expressions of the general will" "personally," and not "by their representatives," as when the Parisian mob brought the king from Versailles; and at other times similar mobs gave "expressions of the general will" through "their representatives,"—overawing the National Assembly by their presence and violence.

The state papers of that revolution cannot be understood as the people of France understood them, without going to Rousseau, Condorcet, &c. for the definition of their terms.

NOTE C. Page 17.

If it be conceded that slaves are *not* a part of those for whom Christ died, and do *not* need to be saved, as we do, "by the foolishness of preaching," then it will be impossible to prove that they have any more "rights" than

any other animals for which Christ did not die, or that they have any more claim to any emancipation at all, either immediate or remote, than our oxen and horses have. But if they are a part of the human race; if the Savior did indeed shed his blood for them as well as for us; if faith in that gospel of his grace, which they cannot "believe" till they "hear" it, be necessary to save them from eternal perdition and capable of raising them to perfect and endless felicity; and if, like other men, they are not immortal, but are actually dying—going into the eternal world, whether prepared or not, every day and every hour; then certainly it becomes us to lose no time in sending them the gospel. They need the gospel more than all things else; as much more, as hell is worse than their present condition, as heaven is better than the condition of a free negro in the United States, and as eternity is longer than human life. Give them, then, the gospel. Let those who can, encourage and aid and sustain the preachers. Let those who can, whether from the pulpit, the press, or in any other way, urge upon planters, the duty of having the gospel preached to them. And let those who can do nothing else, if any such there be, pray that it may be preached to them. Let Christians, at the north and at the south, give to this object, the conversion of the slaves to Christ, the prominence of which it is worthy; let them think of it, and pray for it, and, as they can find opportunity, labor for it, in proportion to its worth, and as the Spirit of Christ dictates, and they will be converted; their masters will labor for their conversion, and for their complete sanctification, and God will bless their labors, and the work will be done.

Now we ask, is it wise, is it kind, is it Christian, to neglect this great object, and to expend all our strength and all our zeal, and endeavor to make all others expend all their strength and their zeal, on an object which, however important, is infinitely less important to the negroes than this? Or, if attention to this object be not wholly omitted, is it wise, or kind, or Christian, to draw off the attention of the friends of the negroes from it, by making any other object more prominent? Would Paul have done it? Would Christ? Should you do it, and do it successfully; and should the result be, that all the slaves in the nation should be emancipated, and that thousands should die in their sins, who, but for the direction which you gave to the public mind, might have been saved,—do you think you should rejoice in it, when standing with them before the judgement seat of Christ?

If you say, your object is to bring the whites to repentance for the sin of suffering them to remain in civil bondage; I ask, is it right to do this, by withdrawing their minds from the still greater sin of suffering them to remain in bondage to Satan?

If it be said that we must procure their release from civil bondage, before the gospel can be successfully preached to them; what is this, but to disparage the gospel of Christ, as an insufficient remedy for the miseries of the human race,—as not adapted to the wants of men, in some of the circumstances in which they may be placed?

Is it not plain that men who take such a course, are not as they should be;—that they have given to the temporal an ascendency over the spiritual in their own minds, for which they ought to be penitent? And when we remember that the right course would bring to those now in slavery, inevitably, safely, and pleasantly to all concerned, all the *temporal* benefits which these men are endeavoring in vain to secure to them by the wrong course,—is not the imperfection of their wisdom as manifest as the imperfection of their piety?—I mean exactly what I say. I have no doubt that many of them possess both wisdom and piety; but both are imperfect, and here is a striking instance of their imperfection.

NOTE D. Page 19.

At a meeting of the Board of Managers of the Maryland State Colonization Society, held April 30, 1833, at the Colonization office, the following preamble and resolution were read, discussed, amended, and adopted unanimously.

Whereas It is the desire of the Maryland State Colonization Society, to hasten as far as they can, the arrival of the period when slavery shall cease to exist in Maryland; and whereas the society believe that this can best be done, by advocating and assisting the cause of colonization, which is considered as the safest, the truest, and the most efficient auxiliary of freedom, under existing circumstances; and whereas the cause of colonization, which has already produced great results, and from which so much is still anticipated, must depend in Maryland, upon the facilities afforded for the transportation and reception of emigrants on the coast of Africa, which can only be secured, to the necessary and desired extent, by the establishment of settlements in Africa, where there will be no restraint upon emigration beyond the control of the state society; and whereas it is believed, for these and other reasons, to be expedient for the state society, to form at this time, a new settlement on the coast of Africa; and whereas it has been represented to the society, that Cape Palmas and its neighborhood offer commercial and agricultural facilities of the most important character, so as to make a settlement there desirable in every point of view; and whereas it is believed that a settlement thus formed, by a society, whose avowed object is the ultimate extirpation of slavery, by proper and gradual efforts, addressed to the understanding and experience of the people of the state, would be viewed with peculiar interest by all those who advocate colonization on account of its tendencies toward liberty, and would receive that aid from them, which would ensure its prosperity and happiness; and whereas the society believe, that it is proper to use every means in their power to raise Maryland to the rank of a free state of this union, not only on account of the immediate benefit to herself, but for the sake of the illustration which she would then furnish of the effect of colonization in removing slavery;

Therefore, be it resolved, That this society will forthwith establish a settlement, at a suitable point on the coast of Africa, and will take immediate measures to procure, both within and without the state, the necessary pecuniary aid.

This autumn, the Maryland State Colonization Society, in conformity with these resolutions, has fitted out an expedition of about 100 emigrants, who are to commence a settlement at Cape Palmas as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made. During the negotiations for this purpose, they will remain at Liberia. Ardent spirits are to be excluded from the Colony by law, as well as by a pledge, which every emigrant is required to give before his departure.

Those who maintain that Colonization is designed, and that it operates, to perpetuate slavery in this country, may find it difficult to reconcile these facts with their assertions.

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